

Oregon Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes
July 23, 2002
Aurora, Oregon

Purpose: To update committee members on program changes and receive advice on policy considerations.

Participants:

Bob Graham, NRCS State Conservationist (co-chair); **Fred Ringer**, FSA Program Manager (substituting co-chair); **Bill Braunworth**, OSU Extension; **Darrel Kenops**, Governor's Office; **Jean Wilkinson**, Farm Bureau; **Jeff Rola**, Oregon Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils; **Alan Christenson**, US Forest Service; **Sam Asai**, FSA State Committee Member; **Eric Henning**, Pheasants Forever; **Jennifer Thompson**, US Fish and Wildlife Service; **Tammy Dennee**, Oregon Wheat Growers League; **Stan Christensen**, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts; **Glen Stonebrink**, Oregon Cattlemen's Association; **F.X. Rosica**, American Farmland Trust; **Dan Edwards**, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife; **Tom Paul**, Oregon Water Resources Department; **Mark Stern**, The Nature Conservancy; **Bruce Taylor**, Wetland Joint Ventures; **Dalton Straus**, FSA State Committee; **Paul Nys**, Oregon Small Woodlands Association; **Mack Barrington**, Oregon Department of Agriculture; **Jim Krahn**, Oregon Dairy Farmers; **Wally Rutledge**, Oregon Department of Forestry; **Chris Rauch**, OWGL; **Andrew Bowman**, Defenders of Wildlife; **Rich Vigil**, **Gayle Norman**, **Danny Burgett**, **Bill White**, **Dave Dishman**, **Joe Evans**, **Tom Makowski**, **Terry Nelson**, **Ron Alvarado**, **Cec Cullison**, **Jim Wright** and **Russ Hatz**, NRCS.

Public:

Dave Mayfield, URS Corporation
John McDonald, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
Mike Barlow, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
Johnny Sundstrom, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Welcome and Opening Remarks – Bob Graham and Fred Ringer

Introductions and welcome.

NRCS Watershed Planning Team: Tom Makowski, Joe Evans, & Terry Nelson

Discussed local watershed planning in Klamath Falls. Briefed members on the accelerated Klamath Basin Planning assistance for Lava Beds; Butte Valley Resource Conservation Districts, California Klamath SWCD, Oregon–Sprague River subbasin Evaluation. See handout map. Briefing paper distributed and discussed on Upper Klamath Basin methodology to complete subbasin assessment and Sprague River Subbasin Conservation Activities.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program Changes (EQIP) – Bill White

Presentation and discussion on new Farm Bill rules and the continued implementation of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program in Oregon. See handout on issue paper for Oregon Technical Advisory Committee. Update of EQIP implementation in Klamath Basin. As of the passage of the 2002 Farm Bill, Oregon and California NRCS received responsibility to administer \$50 million of EQIP funds for the life of the Farm Bill (2002-2007). Each state has separate EQIP fund accounts. Each state has compared ranking criteria, practices, and cost lists for consistency.

EQIP Changes – Bill White: Handout for discussion. Issue paper on EQIP Program Rules and Issues Update as of July 22, 2002. See handout for details.

Technical/Staff Recommendation:

NRCS will prepare draft issue papers for OTAC review and discussion at the next OTAC meeting. The paper will be forwarded prior to the meeting. The issues are:

- ❖ EQIP application evaluation and statewide allocation process.
- ❖ EQIP policy for
 - ❖ New and expanding confined livestock operations.
 - ❖ Clarifications of “livestock-related” and program directions.
 - ❖ Incentive payments for CNMP and other management practices.
- ❖ EQIP Conservation Innovation Grants.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program - Advice:

The Oregon Technical Advisory Committee discussed the elimination of the 1,000 animal unit cap for EQIP eligibility and the ramifications. The State Conservationist was looking for options and recommendations. A summary of advice given follows:

- Should NRCS set a maximum cost share on certain practices?
- One of several goals is to help operator's meet environmental rules.
- Allow local groups to set limits on practices and payments.
- Assign as much authority to local groups as possible and reevaluate after a few years.
- Address existing concerns and problems first.
- Participation process needs to be simple and equitable and impact water quality. Make it so that everyone can participate. Producers that have been around and not new to the system normally will rank higher than the new client will.
- NRCS needs to draft general guidance and present it to OTAC.

Discussion on definition of Ag Producer:

- Ag production first - burden of proof on the producer.
- Oregon's land use laws have some definitions that could be explored.
- Producing animals for sale (food or for fiber).
- Forest land now eligible for EQIP. Add this as a major change in future policy discussions.

Action: Take these recommendations and revise the Issue Paper and present it back to the Oregon Technical Advisory Committee for comments. Also define “livestock related” and “agriculture producer.”

Conservation Planning – Russ Hatz, Mike Barlow, Ron Alvarado

Discussion was on role of conservation planning in the new farm policy.

Basic information and panel discussion on the conservation planning process from a landowner/producer perspective.

Question and answer session followed.

Progress on Non-NRCS Technical Assistance – Dave Dishman

NRCS provided the group with an update on policy development for the role of non-NRCS technical assistance in the new Farm Bill. The group was given an opportunity to provide feedback on the process.

Around August 15th the final version of non-NRCS Technical Assistance policy is scheduled to be released to the states. Rollout will be at the end of this fiscal year. An updated technical service provider issue paper was provided to the group.

A subcommittee was established to provide further advice. Members selected are as follows:

Bill Braunworth, Extension

Sam Asai (payment), FSA State Committee

OACD

Dave Mayfield, private consultant

Andrew Bowman, Defenders of Wildlife

Fred Ringer, FSA

Eric Henning, Pheasants Forever

Jim Krahn, Oregon Dairy Association

Mack Barrington, Oregon Department of Ag

Discussed Oregon at a Glance Maps—Danny Burgett

Handed out maps to use as tools in the next OTAC meeting discussing priority setting with a brief discussion about content.

Public Comments:

No public comment.

Members Comments:

1. A request was made for NRCS to consider cost sharing practices that would help control the spread of noxious weeds in Oregon. By a show of support of all members Encouraged NRCS to pursue addressing this issue.

Action: Fred Ringer and Bill White will report back to group at next meeting.

2. Klamath Basin - Land leveling - concern and effect on terrestrial habitat.

3. Easement concern on impact of Oregon's Private lands.
4. Farm Bill money not intended for hobby farmers.
5. Streamline rules.
6. Farm Bill for agricultural producers.
7. Address family forest owner needs.
8. Open conservation planning outside NRCS.

Members asked to provide feedback on the USDA Strategic Plan now that the Farm Bill has been signed. OTAC members submitted written comments.

The National Association of Conservation Districts' Regional Meeting

The National Association of Conservation Districts West Regional Meeting will be held in Portland this year, September 13-19, 2002 at the Double Tree Lloyd Center. All committee members and organizations are invited to attend.

Closing comments by Fred Ringer and Bob Graham

Fred Ringer: Need to come up with simple, fair, and timely solutions to the new Farm Bill. FSA has been authorized to hire temporary help, but short term. It is a big job and he encourages everyone to bring ideas forward.

Bob Graham: Complimented the group on how far the private lands partnership has come in Oregon. NRCS is looking forward to working with everyone as we move forward in implementing the conservation provisions of the Farm Bill. Thanks for all the advice and great discussions. Bob thanked everyone for coming to the meetings and offering their suggestions and advice.

Next Meeting:

August 20 - Canceled

September 24 – Canby Conference Center

October 22 – Canceled

November 13--TBD